

**Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Specialty Crop Block Grant Program
Guidance and Application Document**

Applications Due: **Monday, April 30**

Applications must be in our office by 5:00 p.m. CT on above date.

Submit Applications to:

Nebraska Department of Agriculture
Ag Promotion and Development
Specialty Crops Block Grant Program
P.O. Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509-4947

Nebraska Department of Agriculture Contact:

Rich Sanne
800-422-6692
rsanne@agr.ne.gov

Reminder:

Application must include one original and four copies.

Introduction

Recently, Congress funded the federal Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP) to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops in the United States. Each state must submit a state plan for review and approval by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in order to receive a base grant of \$100,000, plus an amount that represents the proportion of the value of specialty crop production in the state in relation to the national value of specialty crop production. With these criteria, during this funding cycle, Nebraska can access a maximum of \$104,133 to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

Before USDA will award Nebraska these funds, NDA must submit a detailed state plan explaining how this money will be used to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops.

NDA has developed this grant proposal process in order to provide all interested parties an opportunity to access these funds. NDA's goal is to fund meaningful projects that have the highest likelihood of significant, positive impact on specialty crop production in Nebraska.

Funding Cap

The maximum grant award will be \$25,000. NDA reserves the right to consider larger requests for projects with exceptional merit.

Grant Eligibility

Under USDA rules, grants cannot be awarded for projects that directly benefit a particular commercial product or provide a profit to a single company or individual. Therefore, proposals should be initiated by organizations, industry groups or academic institutions, or should involve collaboration or partnerships between producers, industry groups, academics, or other organizations. Applicants may cooperate with any public or private organization involving agricultural development, research, and/or marketing to enhance Nebraska's specialty crop industry. If two or more individuals or organizations propose a joint project, they may submit one application as co-applicants. Applicants proposing joint projects are not required to form a legal entity but must show in their application how the project potentially impacts and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public rather than a single organization, institution, or individual.

Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops (including floriculture). Specific examples of eligible and ineligible crops can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/fv/scbgp.html> under the Frequently Asked Questions section.

Examples of "enhancing the competitiveness of specialty crops" include, but are not limited to: research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, trade enhancement, food safety, food security, plant health programs, education, "buy local" programs, increased consumption, increased innovation, improved efficiency and reduced costs of distribution systems, environmental concerns and conservation, product development, and developing cooperatives.

Program Policies

Nebraska Department of Agriculture reserves the right to:

- Reject any or all proposals received;
- Request additional information on project proposals;
- Recommend partial funding for proposal that may be less than the full amount requested in the grant application; and
- Tie the release of project funds to completion of necessary, timely progress reports.

Funding Allocation

For projects with less than a six-month life, funding will be allocated 50% upon awarding the grant and signing of contract and 50% on project completion and receipt of final report.

For projects with longer than a six-month time line, funding will be awarded at 50% upon signing of the grant contract, 25% after the interim report is received, and 25% on project completion and receipt of final report. Grantee project reporting timelines will be tied to NDA's reporting obligations to USDA.

The Program will NOT fund the following expenses:

- *Paying off existing debt;*
- *Substituting existing efforts or research already funded;*
- *Purchase of equipment, land, or buildings;*
- *Business entertainment or business gifts; or*
- *Lobbying or political efforts.*

Grant Proposal Review and Selection

Grant applications will initially be assessed by a review committee of NDA staff with input from relevant entities. NDA staff will make final recommendations to the Director of Agriculture.

Questions and Scoring Criteria

There will be 100 points possible, outlined below by section.

Application Instructions

All applications should include the following information:

A. Cover Page

1. Name of applicant whose name should be used on all correspondence. Include contact information (address, phone/fax, e-mail) for one individual. This person should also be the one that will appear on a grant agreement and who will be

responsible for tracking and accounting for project funds and ensuring the completion of the project.

2. Listing of all other individuals, entities, organizations, or businesses involved with the project.
3. Abstract of 200 words or less for the proposed project.

B. Project Purpose (5 points)

In one or two paragraphs, clearly state the specific issue, problem, interest, or need to be addressed. Explain why your project is important and timely.

C. Potential Impact (10 points)

In one page or less, discuss the number of people or operations affected, the intended beneficiaries of the project, and/or potential economic impact if data from the project are available.

D. Goals (5 points)

Describe the overall goal(s) of the project in one or two sentences.

E. Expected Measurable Outcomes (10 points)

Describe at least two distinct, quantifiable and measurable outcomes that directly and meaningfully support your project's purpose. How will success of the project be determined, i.e., what elements will be monitored or evaluated, by whom, how often and for how long?

A major consideration here is:

- *Can project benefits be measured, reported, and tracked over time?*

F. Work Plan (35 points)

On two pages or less, describe your proposal and its expected benefit to the Nebraska specialty crop industry. Explain how each goal and measurable outcome will be accomplished. Be clear about who will do the work. Include appropriate time lines. Expected measurable outcomes may be long term and exceed the grant period. If so, provide a timeframe when long-term outcome measures will be achieved.

The major considerations here are:

- *Does the project provide an overall economic benefit to Nebraska's agricultural and specialty crop industry?*
- *Does the project make good business sense and does it have a high likelihood of success?*
- *Are the expected benefits of the proposal commensurate with total investment?*

Other consideration will be given to:

- *Does the project contribute to a positive image of Nebraska specialty crops and agriculture?*
- *Does the project provide educational benefits to the public about Nebraska specialty crops and agriculture?*
- *Does the project enhance capacity development, infrastructure, or create jobs?*

G. Project Commitment and Oversight (10 points)

1. On one page or less, describe the partnerships, alliances, networks, or other collaborative efforts that will be created to implement this project. List all parties involved and describe what each contributes in skills and abilities to make this proposal succeed and work toward the goals and outcomes, as well as the commitments for each party (in-kind, monetary, labor, etc.).
2. Describe the oversight practices that provide sufficient knowledge of grant activities to ensure proper and efficient administration.

Major consideration will be given to whether:

- *The project creates collaborative efforts that enable multiple organizations or individuals to achieve collective results that would not be possible by individual entities; and*
- *The applicants demonstrate commitment by way of in-kind time, resources, or other means.*

H. Financial Feasibility (25 points)

How do you intend to use the grant funds? Provide a breakdown of the components of the proposal and where the grant funds fit into the overall project financing. Prioritize funding needs, if possible. Provide budget estimates for the total project cost.

Administrative costs should not exceed 10% of a proposed budget. A financial match is not required for this program; however, proposals with a match will be considered favorably. This question requires a one page or less narrative and a one page or less standard budget outline.

Major consideration will be given to whether:

- *Grant funds are being targeted for spending as indicated in the project work plan to make the project successful;*
- *The project makes good business sense according to the proposed expenses and activities noted in the budget;*
- *The budget supports the anticipated benefits and whether the benefits are commensurate with the total project financing;*
- *The project coordinating entity has a process in place to track and account for grant fund expenditures; and*
- *Can accounting and project records be readily retrieved and reported?*

Sample Budget

Category	SCBGP	Cash	In-Kind	Total	Comments
Personnel			\$1,000	\$1,000	50 hours @ \$20/hour by whom
Equipment					
lease/rental		\$500		\$ 500	50 hours @ \$10/hour by whom
Supplies			\$ 500	\$ 500	What and by whom
Travel		\$405		\$ 405	500 miles @ \$.29/mile and 10 days @ \$26/day for meals
Consultant	\$2,500			\$2,500	Consultant fee
Totals	\$2,500	\$905	\$1,500	\$4,905	

I. Signed Agreements Page (provided on page 7)

Agreement:

I/we the undersigned applicants, _____
(name/names)

of _____, Nebraska, hereby make application for specialty crop block
(city/cities)

grant program funds, under the terms and conditions of the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, in
the amount of \$_____. The total cost of the project is \$_____.
(amount requested) (total project amount)

The undersigned hereby warrant to the State of Nebraska that to the best of my/our knowledge, all
information presented in this grant application is factual and true; that I/we understand that if this
proposal is funded, I/we will be required to sign a grant agreement and other necessary
documentation containing terms and conditions upon which funds will be released; and that I/we
understand that I/we will be required to submit progress report(s) and a final report at the
completion of the project as a condition to participating in this grant program.

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Title:_____

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Title:_____

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Title:_____